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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995

Revised estimates under sections 3 and 8: Africa: critical economic situation, recovery and development

Ninth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/48/74) relating to Africa: critical economic situation, recovery and development. During its consideration of the item, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. By its resolution 46/151 of 18 December 1991, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, as set out in the annex to the resolution. In paragraph 3 of his report, the Secretary-General states that, following the adoption of resolution 46/151 by the General Assembly, programme 45 of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 was revised to integrate fully all elements of the New Agenda.

3. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report that, following the restructuring of the Secretariat in the course of the 1992-1993 biennium, the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries was established within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

4. The Advisory Committee notes that the General Assembly in the context of its approval of the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995, approved the activities and resources for the programme in the amount of $3,103,400 under section 8 of the budget.

5. As indicated in paragraph 1 of the Secretary-General's report, in its resolution 48/228 II, paragraph 43, of 23 December 1993, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to consider the creation of a new budget section relating to the New Agenda for Africa for the 1990s with recommendations for additional resources and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its resumed forty-eighth session. For the reasons given in paragraph 5 of his report, however, it is stated that "the existing arrangements, therefore, would appear to be the most effective and it would seem desirable to maintain them. The issue should be looked at again at a later stage in the light of review of implementation of programme 45 by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, which will undertake an in-depth evaluation of the programme in 1996."

6. While noting the reasons given by the Secretary-General in favour of maintaining the current arrangements, the Committee is of the opinion that there are a number of shortcomings in his report. In the first place, the proposals are not submitted in their proper context. The report does not explain how the New Agenda for the Development of Africa, which derives from General Assembly resolution 46/151, is being implemented by the Secretariat, nor does it contain a clear indication of the role of section 8 in the implementation of that agenda.

7. The Advisory Committee points out that the New Agenda for the Development of Africa has system-wide implications and is financed from throughout the budget and through extrabudgetary resources as well. The Committee believes that the objectives set out in paragraph 43 of General Assembly resolution 48/228 II should have been addressed in the report of the Secretary-General in all their aspects. Specifically, the report should have addressed the question of whether General Assembly resolution 48/228 could require the incorporation of all activities throughout the budget related to the New Agenda for the Development of Africa. In that case resources would have to be transferred to the new section from a variety of other sections.

8. In this connection, the Advisory Committee points out that, although the United Nations has a "programme" budget, it is generally along the lines of organizational units. This being the case, it is the view of the Advisory Committee that if, in requesting the Secretary-General to consider the establishment of a new budget section, the intention of the General Assembly was to incorporate in it all activities relating to the New Agenda, then this would require a substantial change in existing budgetary procedures by establishing a budget section that cuts across organizational lines. The Secretary-General should analyse the implications of the above and report to the General Assembly for a policy decision.

9. In paragraph 6 of his report, the Secretary-General outlines the additional activities to be undertaken under programme 45. The Advisory Committee notes that a number of these additional activities are intended to implement the Tokyo Declaration. In this connection, the Committee recalls that the General Assembly in paragraph 25 of its resolution 48/214,

> "Requests Governments and organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations within their respective spheres of competence to take

appropriate measures in order to implement the commitments contained in the Tokyo Declaration and to take other initiatives, as may be necessary, with the participation of interested parties from Africa and the international community, to ensure an effective follow-up of the Conference."

The Advisory Committee also observes that some of these activities are similar to the operational activities undertaken by agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. In this connection, the Committee trusts that efforts will be made to avoid duplication. Additional information on the relationship of these activities to the commitments referred to in the Tokyo Declaration would have been useful.

10. The Advisory Committee notes that an amount of $428,500 has been proposed as additional resources to be met from within the overall 1994-1995 appropriation through redeployment from the programme under section 3 of the budget dealing with the elimination of apartheid.

11. In this connection, the Committee observes that, while political developments have taken place in South Africa, the General Assembly has not yet taken a decision to reduce the activities in section 3. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls what it had noted in paragraph 12 of its report of 3 December 1993 (A/48/7) that "in a number of programmes it is possible that mandates relating to certain policy-making organs and the substantive activities undertaken under their direction will be terminated or substantially changed during the biennium 1994-1995". The Committee reiterates its opinion that, in such circumstances, "the Secretary-General should report as soon as possible on the use of any resources no longer required for their original purpose".

12. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the Secretary-General, at the present stage, be authorized to enter into commitments under section 8 of the programme budget for 1994-1995 not exceeding $428,500; the question of any necessary additional appropriation and of any necessary transfer of resources can be determined in the context of the performance report. The Committee trusts that every effort will be made to ensure that staff resources authorized by the General Assembly for the Office of the Special Coordinator are in place and are used to the maximum extent.

13. The General Assembly may wish to request the Secretary-General to submit a further report on this matter, which would take into account any further policy guidance it may wish to give and would address the concerns raised by the Advisory Committee above, and in particular in paragraph 8.